



JEWISH COMMUNITY  
RELATIONS COUNCIL  
MINNESOTA & THE DAKOTAS

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March 8, 2021

Chair Roger Chamberlain  
Minnesota State Capitol

Re: Support for SF 966

Dear Chair Chamberlain and Members of the Education Finance and Policy Committee,

On behalf of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas (JCRC), please accept this letter of support in favor of SF 966.

As the designated public affairs voice of the Jewish community, the JCRC is tasked with promoting tolerance, understanding, and diversity throughout Minnesota and the Dakotas. In this capacity, the JCRC is frequently asked by members of our Jewish community to work with them as we seek to navigate the inherent difficulties of being a religious minority in a state and country which historically exclusively organizes itself – including the school calendar - around the dominant religion and culture.

In our decades of work with both Jewish families and local school districts it has been our experience that reasonable accommodations and/or modifications to the school calendar, which foster equity and inclusion, are best secured when districts act proactively rather than reactively.

For this reason, we applaud the provision of SF 966 which require school boards to “provide annual notice to parents of the school district's policy relating to a pupil's absence from school for religious observance” because we believe it will strongly incentivize schools to be intentional in both developing and publicizing thoughtful policies.

Similarly, the portion of the legislation which makes clear that a “school board may consider the community's religious observance when adopting an annual school calendar” is important for clarifying that it is appropriate for school boards to account for a district’s religious diversity when deciding upon the first day of school, homecoming, prom, or other events which only occur once during the school year.

Thank you for considering our perspective and your service.

Sincerely,

Ethan Roberts, J.D.  
JCRC Director of Government Affairs